

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connolly*

## THE FOURTH SIEGE OF LIMERICK



## Eating – His words



## The Mafia's Musical Ride

## Josie





# THE PLIGHT OF THE EARLS

IT'S SAD news all round, but nowhere more poignant than in Patrickswell where Lord Harrington, chairman of the Irish Bloodstock Breeders' Association, is having to drag out a hand-to-mouth existence in a 12-roomed house surrounded by 150 brood mares and no longer able to turn for comfort and support to his 27-year-old son and heir Lord Petersham.

For Richie Ryan's Penal Laws (i.e. the Wealth Tax) has driven Lord P., worth a modest £20 million, into exile. It was England's Penal Laws (i.e. the Capital Gains Tax) that caused Lord Harrington himself to grace Patrickswell with his presence in the first instance and to honour Ireland by adopting Irish citizenship in 1965. Something ought to be done about it all. I don't know quite what, but, perhaps, Richie could be approached by a deputation of Limerick's unemployed and invited to leave Lord Petersham with £1 million, even £2 million, to help his old man rather than have him crying all the way to the bank? I'm sure Limerick AFC, of which Lord Petersham was President, will be ready to club together to give spuds and buttermilk (and a lump of sugar for the horses on high days and holy days) to poor da enmeshed in our Penal Laws. We must not have him thrown on the roadside like the Joyces of Newcastle West, an itinerant family who dared to move on to Assumpta Park, an enclave bespoke as a playground for the well-dressed, well-behaved children of the Residents' Association. Such insolence that Mr. Joe Devine, chairman of the Assumpta Park Residents' Association, told Mr. Patrick Joyce, 24, that if he had not moved his sick wife and their two daughters, aged three weeks and one year, within 24 hours, the indignant residents (obviously members of the *haut bourgeoisie*) would drag his van away and leave it outside the Garda station in The Square. God save Lord Petersham! Down with the native Irish, especially the Joyces! I wonder how many of these creatures in Newcastle West read the *Limerick Leader* and Dr. Newman's remarks as he opened Community Siamsa '75. Let me repeat what His Lordship said: "If we lose our community spirit, we will have nothing left". Nothing? We'll have Joe Devine — and his ilk.

STILL DEALING with local intelligence, I note there have been complaints that houses for workers (who else?) in Limerick, Croom, and Newport on the Limerick-Tipperary border have been built without chimneys so preventing the use of solid fuel — and, goodness knows, that's dear enough — for heating and cooking and that prospective tenants, who know they cannot afford the constantly soaring price of electricity, have been invited officially to pay another £500 a head to have chimneys installed. What genius of an architect was allowed in the first instance to build these expensive novelties for the National Building Agency and what local authority allowed it?

Mind you, their design is not quite as bad as that discovered by an alert Councillor of the Clare County Board of Health a generation ago. Glancing over the extensive — and expensive — plans for a building for use by the Board he discovered a room that had neither doors nor windows! It cast some doubt on the architect's competence and the plans had to be re-drawn. The Clare case is only marginally parallel because the building in question was an extension to the local Mental Hospital and it was faintly possible that the door-less, window-less room was intended to immure a desperately recalcitrant patient. I would hesitate to offer this excuse in the case of the new Limerick housing scheme. Nonetheless, would-be home-makers would be mad to fork out £500 a head. For inaction in this respect, and I mean inaction, see your local T.D. Or your psychiatrist!

ACCORDING to the *Limerick Echo*, Todds put on a presentation at the Parkway Motel on behalf of the Variety Club's Mentally Handicapped Children's Fund. The whole

BY DERMOT MCEVOY

affair netted the Fund a well-deserved £700 and Todds, wholly incidentally, some perhaps less well-deserved publicity. It was "devised and presented" by Gerry O'Sullivan, Todd's assistant general manager, who is shown in the *Echo* photograph with Todd's spectacular showgirls, Clare, Libby, Jane and Terry. Libby and Terry are showing their navels (a fashion it will take some time for Limerick to adopt), so too is Clare, the brunette shown next to an admiring Gerry. Clare, I read, has appeared in the London show *Oh! Calcutta*. I don't doubt that many who turned up at the Parkway thought this had something to do with India, but then so did a London businessman who wrote to the *Financial Times* protesting the show's obscenities; he said he'd lived all his life in Calcutta and that its inhabitants were most respectable people. The editor did not tell him that *Oh! Calcutta* had nothing to do with that hapless Indian city, that the phrase is a sort of shorthand for the French, *O quel cul tu as!* Don't write to me to translate. Try the library, or get your daughter to ask one of the nuns. Better still, ask Gerry O'Sullivan.

THERE CAN be nothing but contempt for Limerick City Council for its refusal (largely inspired by the Mayor, rat-curer Alderman Kennedy) to accept a motion of sympathy with the victims of the Birmingham pub bombs, who include an Irishwoman who lost her two young sons. He judged the motion "political". All the more praise, therefore, for the Limerick Council of Trades Unions which, on the proposal of Transport Union delegate Vincent Moran, passed the motion and condemned the use of violence as a means of solving the Northern Ireland question. Moran courageously said the time had come for people to stand up and be counted in this whole context. I wonder where Mayor Kennedy stands in relation to the savage internecine war between the Officials, Provos, and the Irish Republican Socialist Party which has led to many murders and, recently, to the "knee-capping" (what a dreadful euphemism!) of five Officials in Dundalk.

Who would he support condemn over that last encounter? Would he sit on the fence, scared shit? Apropos the latest bloody rivalries, the words of London *Times* columnist Bernard Levin come to mind: "It seems natural that factions dealing in fictions should suffer from frictions and break into fractions". No doubt Mayor Kennedy and his ilk are awaiting for the emergence of a True Prophet before they show their allegiance and question the received beliefs:

There's a great text in Galatians  
Once you trip on it, entails  
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,  
One sure, if another fails —

Meanwhile, the Kennedys and the Coughlans are backing each way.

NOT much socialist comment this time on the glaring anomalies of our free-booting society which places rates the entertainer, the bookmaker, the grocer (not forgetting the 40p rabbitman) ahead of the hard-pressed itinerant and the workless family man and prefers the law of force to the force of law — a society where the individual's *pay* is in inverse proportion to what he *earns*. We shall return to this theme; meanwhile like Byron's Don Juan:

Let's have wine and women, mirth and laughter,  
Sermons and soda water the day after.  
Up Garryowen!



# EATING - HIS WORDS

IF I'D been in Limerick for President O'Dalaigh's visit I'd have a question for him, an uncomfortable one. Uncomfortable also for *The Irish Times*, which judged this letter I sent them recently not worthy of publication. I think it deserves an airing. The dates are important.

Sir, — You gave pride of place in Letters to the Editor on April 18 to a denial by President O Dalaigh through his Private Secretary of remarks attributed to the President in his speech at the Hotel Marigny in Paris on March 14 and reported in the *Irish Times* on March 15. Did you allow yourself to be overawed by the source and sense of occasion to fail to note that the denial would have been more credible if made a month earlier? It seems curious that the President should have waited so long to repudiate Eileen O'Brien's account of his official dinner to the French President, M. Valery Giscard D'Estaing and curiouser that his so-prompt *demarche* should come only in response to a letter to you April 16 from my old St. Flannan's classmate, Liam Keith Lenihan, now of New York, when he rebuked President O Dalaigh for quoting (according to your report):

*The Veteran arose like an uplifted lance  
Crying, 'Comrades, a health to the Monarch of France!'  
With bumpers and cheers they did as he bade  
For King Louis is loved by the Irish Brigade.*

President O Dalaigh, still according to your report, said that, without prejudice to Republican France, his sentiments were the same.

It must be expected that the President's secretariat keeps a newspaper-cuttings file of reports of his activities at home and abroad so that he can vet them and issue a *timely* denial, if such a course is appropriate and, naturally, in accordance with the truth? All Liam Lenihan did was to express his distaste (and mine) at this reported praise, *uncontradicted by the President or his Private Secretary*, of the activities of the Irish Brigade on

behalf of the Bourbon despot, Louis Quatorze, who engaged (for money) Irish Brigade members to put down the revolt of Protestant peasants in the Cevennes by the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children.

Liam Lenihan, incidentally, thereby exposed the myth of pure-souled Irish heroes on "far, foreign fields". There are readers of the *Irish Times* from Brooklyn Heights (where Lenihan lives) to Foxrock (where I live) whose preferred heroes of the epoch are the supporters of another Louis, Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, who saw in life nothing but the truth and proclaimed it even as, his biographer George Bruun puts it, the knife of the guillotine over his head flashed in the rays of the setting sun. Did the President think he'd got away with *his* version of French history, his glorifying of murderous Irish mercenaries? If he did, he forgot the lurking Lenihans and — dare I claim it? — the McEvoy's.

As a Life Member of the National Union of Journalists, I feel you owed it to your reporter, Eileen O'Brien, (if not to Liam Lenihan, who is well able to look after himself) to add a footnote to President O Dalaigh's *demarche* confirming or denying the accuracy of her up-till-then unchallenged account of what he said at the Hotel Marigny. With such a footnote, we'd know whether to believe a President or a mere reporter (think of the wading-through-blood speech and denials by ex-President de Valera!); without it, and having regard to the Presidential timing of his denial, we must remain in doubt. There is one consolation. We can only be grateful to Liam Lenihan and his post-St. Flannan's history teacher for putting in true perspective the behaviour abroad of the "indomitable Irishry"; we know only too well what they're capable of — at home! — Yours, etc., Dermot McEvoy.

Truth in the news in the *Irish Times*? Not quite, old boy!  
Not when it's not knocking Conor Cruise O'Brien.

D.McE

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## AN IRISH LITANY

THE following Litany has miraculously composed itself after five decades of the Glorious Mysteries of Irish Freedom.

NOTE: (Members of the Irish Catholic Higher Larky refused to comment on it because they said they never interfered in State Matters. Learned schoolmasters stated that the language of the litany was tired and cliched but that unfortunately the cliches were true).

*The rich are growing richer,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
The poor are hungry as ever,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
The Homeless still crowd together,  
From Labour deliver us.  
The widows have scarcely a mite,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
The jobless are queueing in thousands,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
Education for mostly the wealthy,  
From Labour deliver us.  
Republicans relish the trigger,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
We must only use the Natural Rhythm,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
All our mineral wealth is being raped,  
From Labour deliver us.  
Our slums breed social infection,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
Big Business fattens on profits,*

*From Fine Gael O save us.  
And the workers sweat out their repayments,  
From Labour deliver us.  
We boast of great social advances,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
When the National Cake is divided,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
When the 'weak' are provided with crumbs,  
From Labour deliver us.  
We're blinded with National Visions,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
And when we speak of Democracy,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
As we speak of Socialist goals,  
From Labour deliver us.  
Our courts smile at the wealthy,  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
And the Puppets of Pull reign supreme,  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
As we go on our knees to the Bankers,  
From Labour deliver us.  
As we hope for a glorious future  
From Fine Gael O save us.  
As we hope for a glorious future  
From Fianna Fail protect us.  
As we hope for a glorious future,  
From Labour deliver us.*

O MEN AND WOMEN LET US GET OFF OUR KNEES.





### ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Most of the transport in the city was provided by horse, pony and donkey cars. Due to the iron-shod wheels of all cars and the tearing action of the iron-shod hooves of the animals, the surface of the streets was ground into dust, causing pot-holes everywhere. The pot-holes were filled with shovelfuls of broken stones and mud to make a neat repair. The pot-holes became traps for anyone careless enough to step into one of them.

The carriages of the landed gentry and of the undertakers, dashing along at the fearsome speed of ten miles per hour, spattered the pedestrians with mud. Traffic accidents and drunken driving were rare. The greatest traffic hazard was the runaway horse, which was also the star turn of the hero in fiction; and this occurred as often in fact as it did in fiction. The wealthy landowners had horse-drawn carriages for travelling and many of them also had motor cars.

### THE DOCTORS

Doctors with any pretensions to eminence used carriages when visiting their wealthy patients. General practitioners usually walked to their patients; the exercise being considered beneficial. All medicos carried a small, black bag, containing some implements resembling miniature carpenter's tools. One implement was a wooden hearing-aid, which the doctor placed against the patient's chest, like a water inspector listening for leaks. Another implement was a small, circular rubber-tired mallet, with which the doctor tapped the patient's chest while the latter called out "9 .. 9 ... 9". If reception was good and the sound came through clear and resonant, the doctor painted a word picture of a happy and carefree life. If the reception was clouded by atmospheric, the medico's face became clouded by anxiety. The patient's face then became clouded with anxiety. The medico apparently feared the worst. The patient and relatives then feared the worst. The only one who became happy about the whole affair was the undertaker, who saw the silver lining.

Some doctors were efficient and some were impractical. One of the latter kind told a legless patient to remain in bed and to avoid all strenuous exercise, particularly walking — walking, he stated, was definitely bad for the patient!

### THE POOR

Poverty and near-destitution were commonplace in the city. Because of the poverty, some parents could not afford to send their children to school. The parents needed the child labour to help the family to exist. Because of this, total illiteracy was commonplace amongst the poor. Added to this were those who were able to read but unable to write. Most of the children attending the city schools were barefooted. Whether literate or illiterate, public credulity was strong and belief in the clergy was absolute.

There were several places in the city near the various markets where agricultural labourers and other unskilled workers assembled, in the hope of being hired for a day's labour. The payment was one shilling per day, "with their legs under the table". Sick and indigent people, who through misfortune were unable to work, came to those places in the hope of gaining employment for their children. Farm labourers were called "spalps" and child labourers "spalpeens", thus preserving the ancient Gaelic idiom for slave labour.

### THE PAWNSHOPS

There were more than a dozen pawnbrokers in the city. Their offices ranged from one in Thomondgate in the North to

# The Fourth Siege of Limerick

Parker's in the South and Browne's in the east. The pawnshops were commodious enough to hold the large variety of goods pawned. In a penurious age, "uncle" made a nice profit. In an age of affluence his trade slackened, but as the goods were reduced he got his money back.

A pawnbroker's ledger was lined and numbered from 1 to 100 on each page. He was thus enabled to see in a few seconds how good or bad his trade was. An examination of the ledgers of several "uncles" showed that on Monday of each week over 200 clients pledged goods for sums varying from one shilling to ten shillings. Noting the various sums, it was seen that the five-shilling figure claimed sixty of each hundred lines.

To obtain an accurate assessment of the financial condition of the very poor, it is necessary to examine the ledgers of "uncle". But this alone is not enough: it is also necessary to scrutinise the ledgers of such publicans who gave credit or "tick". The scrutiny of the publicans' ledgers shows that there were many families who lived on "tick". Some names and addresses appear on both the publicans' and pawnbrokers' ledgers. The pattern of pawn and pub is constant through the years.

On Monday, 200 clients visited "uncle"; on Tuesday the number was 150; on Wednesday, the figure dropped to 50. Thursday, being a half-day, showed that those unfortunates who were due for the sack on Friday pawned gold and silver watches and other goods. The pawnshops remained open until 11 p.m. on Saturdays.

Friday and Saturday were the days of uniting. On those two days "uncle" and client were united in common joy. The "uncle" was happy to get his money back. The client was happy to be able to be able to redeem the goods pledged. The pawnbroker, bringing in one hundred pounds in gold and silver on Monday morning, was happy to take home one hundred and twenty pounds on Saturday night. This sum represented a profit of 20% per week.

The life of a pawnbroker was not all routine: there was the occasional novice burglar trying to pawn stolen goods and the shamed drunkard pawning his wife's grandeur. Such events and the occasional visit of a constable gave spice to his life and sweetened the kitty. There was also the desperate woman, voluble in pleading to obtain the exorbitant sum of one shilling.

A pawnbroker gave but a tithe of the value of the goods pawned. In such a case, "uncle" hardened his heart — in so far as one can harden a diamond — and sent the unfortunate one off his premises. The sale of unredeemed goods, particularly jewellery, was the bonus for good trading.

Pawnbrokers were the financial barometers of the city. Socially they were a cut above the genteel and shabby genteel.

### THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY

The Royal Irish Constabulary held seven barracks in the city. These were located at William Street, John Street, Mary Street, Frederick Street, Edward Street, Mulgrave Street (near the 'Pike'), Caherdavin and at Mill Road, Corbally. On the outskirts of the city, about a mile distant, there were more police barracks. These were located at Cratloe Castle on the Ennis Road, at the crossroads at Castletroy on the Dublin Road, at Dooradoyle on the Cork Road, at the end of Barrack



Road, Mungret, and at Clarina. From this it can be seen that the city was held and encircled by a mobile police force, with about 20 men in each barrack. The number of police in the city was over three hundred. In the county and country generally, there was a police barrack within a half mile of every Lord's residence.

Recruits to the R.I.C. were selected for their physique. On enlistment the recruit swore on oath of allegiance to the reigning monarch and his or her successors. They were then sent to a training department where they were drilled like army recruits in the use of firearms. They were armed successively with each improved form of rifle as supplied to the army. They wore a bottle-green uniform with black buttons and black leather belt, holding a baton in a leather case and a pouch with handcuffs. When carrying firearms they also wore a black leather bandolier containing cartridges for their rifle. Every year they spent a fortnight on a training course. When leaving the city for this annual event they marched in military formation with rifles on their shoulders. During their absence other men took their places.

Bicycles were the normal mode of transport, but in an emergency the R.I.C. were empowered to seize any form of transport for their immediate use. In general they were not unpleasant but held themselves aloof and few people wilfully sought their company. When taking a person under arrest to the nearest barrack they would usually handcuff the prisoner with hands in front.

In court cases a constable would state, 'Acting on information received' etc., without divulging the source of his information. Such a statement was accepted as evidence and could result in the conviction of an accused person. The constable could not be compelled to divulge the source of his information. On conviction a prisoner sentenced to imprisonment was taken to the County Jail in Mulgrave Street in a totally enclosed four-wheeled, horsedrawn prison van.

Every constable was sent to patrol several streets. This was called his beat. By a blast on his police whistle he could, if needed, summon help from a nearby beat. A citizen could also by a blast on a police whistle summon a constable from his beat. Few citizens availed of this privilege, as penalties were imposed for its abuse or for possessing a police whistle without lawful need.

Every Constable was compelled to possess a civilian suit of clothes to enable him to mix undetected among the civilian population and thereby gain information. Their stature and ear-splitting silence, or their authoritative voice if they spoke, always revealed their identity. They were the eyes and the ears of the British Government in Ireland, seeing all, hearing all and putting all in their daily report to their superior officers. Promotion to the rank of Sergeant was by a competitive examination assisted by a zealously filled daily reports. The higher ranks such as District Inspector, etc., were the perquisite of retired Colonels and Majors of the British Army.  
(To be continued).

# LETTER to the EDITOR

## TOGHER TENANTS

(ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION)

11, HAZEL ROAD,  
TOGHER,  
CORK

I am the secretary of Togher Tenants' (Action & Development Organisation). Along with other tenant groups in Cork, our members have been on rent strike for the past four years in our fight for an equitable rent scale and habitable homes for our families.

In recent years, local authority housing throughout the country, especially schemes commissioned by the N.B.A., has proved to be criminally sub-standard in far too many instances to be lightly glossed over.

The current Differential Rent Scheme for local authority dwellings, introduced by the present Minister for Housing on 1st July 1973, needs only to be studied by a layman to reveal extraordinary anomalies: for instance, a married man with four dependant children is required to pay more rent than a married man with one or two children with the same basic income, and living in identical houses, maximum rents can be raised at three-yearly intervals (starting next year) to cover maintenance costs, which, due to bad planning, materials and "lump" workmanship in the initial construction, are bound to escalate interminally. There is no tax free allowance on home payments for a tenant. There is no rates remission for a tenant in a new house. A tenant must pay out, immediately, 14% of any Cost of Living wage rise, or indeed any wage increase. Couple all this with the fact that local authority tenants are, almost by definition, in the lower income bracket and that National Wage Agreements are based on percentage increases and it is obvious that our situation is desperate.

These issues are what we are fighting about. Some of our members have been jailed, some have sentences hanging over

them, and almost all have been litigated against in one way or another, either by way of Civil Bill, Civil Process or Eviction Order.

My organisation is affiliated to the Joint Council of Corporation Tenants' Organisations (in no way connected with N.A.T.O., who swallowed a raw deal on the behalf of tenants without studying it); and I have been asked by the Executive of that Council to expand our informal liaisons with other tenant groups throughout the country, the better to co-ordinate all our efforts.

For example, we have reports from various architects, engineers, lawyers, doctors, etc., appertaining to NBA housing in Cork; undoubtedly these could be complemented and could in turn complement surveys etc., carried out in other areas.

Would all those interested and involved get in touch with me at the above address. (We are multi-political, our common denominator is Local Authority Tenancy).

Jerry Holt

## A LABOUR STORY

The threatened strike by the nurses of St. Munchin's Maternity Hospital, Ennis Road, recently, as the result of the alleged political appointment of a Ward Sister in preference to that of the acting sister who had been carrying out the duties of the post over the past 18 months, led to the publication of a distorted statement from the Mid-Western Health Board, published in the "Limerick Leader".

At a later date, in the same newspaper, an obliging letter from the Irish Nursing Organisation agreed with the earlier statement of the Mid-Western Health Board, and pointed out that the said appointment was the correct one to make, as the appointee had the required qualifications and was the unanimous choice.

A letter from the nurses of the hospital, by way of rejoinder, and which had the support of all the doctors there, was sent to the "Leader", duly signed, but it never saw the light, since publication of same would cause no small amount of embarrassment to the Tutor Sister, featured in Helen Buckley's Leisure Page around the same time .. and that wouldn't make good "copy".

Further developments will be awaited with some interest.



## LIMERICK CHARACTERS (I)

# Josie

A life-long and dedicated "drop-out", ever before the term became fashionable or had even been invented .. a stocky man of indeterminate age .. wearing the same distinctive "uniform", winter and summer ... an old, shiny cap pulled well down over the neatly-shaped head .. a thick scarf smothering the neck .. a long, black overcoat, tied in the middle like a Franciscan's robe, covering an indefinite number of shorter coats .. a battered pipe going full steam .. a fixed, averted stare .. a quiet, metallic voice .. a pair of woolen socks, tucked tightly into heavy boots ... a stout walking-stick, held sergeant-major style, permanently under the left arm .. Put all these, and a few more, images together and a picture of Josie comes into focus.

Once seen, the spectacle of Josie sailing forth on his daily rounds is a sight to be remembered. For forty years, he has been a familiar figure in Limerick, being usually seen making his purposeful way around the city's back streets. In that time, few people can claim to have seen Josie without his all-the-year-round "rig-out". In a changing society, he has remained impervious to time, clime and shifting dress patterns.

Though Josie originally came from the Blake's Boreen area of Rosbrien, he could not be considered anything other than a citizen of the entire city. And, befitting such a description, he has lived in many and varied abodes throughout Limerick. In his earlier years, he showed a preference for the "uptown" part of the city but in recent times he has gradually gravitated towards "downtown" districts in his domiciliary movements.

In the fifties and early sixties, Alec Bogue's house at Emmet Place off St. Joseph's Street, became a hospitable haven for an assortment of casually employed building tradesmen. During this time, the house was Limerick's nearest equivalent to Dublin's "Catacombs". Josie, who had earlier lived in a room off Little Barrington Street, found a regular place among these often out of work but ever resourceful artisans.

Some time afterwards, he took up residence in a semi-derelict house off Gerald Griffin Street, until the Corporation bashed in its roof on top of him. Later, he went to live in a laneway near Barrington's Hospital, before crossing the Abbey river to his present address at the Simon Community Hostel at Charlotte Quay.

Josie is a man of regular habits and seldom strays from his beat of sympathetic religious houses and other friendly sources. During less prosperous times, he could be seen as one of a weekly Thursday queue at the rear of the Dominican Church, as he waited patiently for the priest's "little help" of six (old) pence. Josie has never been known to badger or harass anybody for money or anything else. Occasionally, however, when all his sources have run dry, he has been known to proffer an empty tobacco-pouch or an upturned palm to a likely passer-by.

Sean Bourke tells how he was strolling past the Dominican Church one day when he met Josie. Dipping his hand into his pocket, he pulled out three two-shilling pieces and offered them to his fellow-Limerickman. Josie looked hard at him and after a slow appraisal said, "You can't afford *all* that", and promptly handed back two of the three silver pieces.

Josie has added a few more attractions to his outfit in recent years. A bulging bag of his prized possessions and a tin box containing a few cigarettes are among these additions. But the most obvious possession of all is his "poor man's flock" — a small pack of dogs of mixed pedigree, frequently to be seen trailing expectantly along behind him.

Still, Josie's pride and joy continues to be his pipe-smoking achievements. It seems unlikely that he will ever receive the

He utters ne'er a word but ambles on  
With measured steps and neat aplomb.  
Man of many coats, he tours his random beat,  
Immune from winter's cold and summer's heat.  
No business cares nor bitter politics for him,  
He cares not who's kicked out — or who gets in.  
Puffing his pipe, to his heart's content,  
Josie, Limerick's first, free-born gent.

"Pipeman of the Year" award but it is difficult to believe that the records of Jack Lynch and other winning notables match Josie's prowess and sense of fulfilment in this exercise.

During the long, hard winter of 1963, a rumour went around Limerick that Josie had been found dead in a room in Mungret St. However, anyone, knowing anything about the man's onion-like ensemble knew better. But the need of crossing the road presents the greatest risk to his life and limb. His knack of suddenly stepping off the footpath and walking diagonally across the road, oblivious of traffic of any kind, has put the driving skills of many motorists to the full test.

There is a lesson to be learned from his refusal to participate in the economic competition of our present society. It is certain that the world would be a strife-free and tranquil place if all its people were as peaceful as the man with the ill-chosen nickname — "Mad" Josie.

## AN APRIL INCIDENT

I HAD an avenue of time to observe Josie. We were both going towards the Convent door. He was ahead of me on the warm April evening but there was no mistaking Josie's familiar figure: the long black overcoat corded at the waist; the capped head set close on his shoulders; the trouser ends twined into his socks; the laced ankle boots and the rough walking stick angled from his arm. Josie seemed to 'move' as distinct from walk. His gait was slow, steady, even.

We reached the steps together. I slowed. He didn't look, didn't say anything. He knew where the doorbell was and pressed twice firmly. We waited.

"Have you a fag"?

"Sorry, I haven't any on me".

"Hmmm".

He was clean shaven with just an odd blade line of blood on his cheek. He had not removed the quenched pipe from his mouth. I noticed its newly acquired cap — a Jameson bottle top. A golden piece of downright invention cupped neatly over the dark pipe bowl.

Josie's call was being answered. I could hear the approaching swish and rustle within. The large door swung half open. A nun stood there, one of her white fingered hands still holding the high door lock. A split second of summing up the callers seemed a hesitation of eternity. She looked at Josie, at me, at Josie again and then at the two of us. I explained the reason for my call.

"Yes come in please"

"Ah — would you wait out there for awhile"

Josie hadn't spoken. The door was closed. I was asked to take a seat in the hallway. The nun faded like a whisper into the gloom of waxed corridors. I was left in silence. A shaft of stained light dappled the cold black and white hall tiles. I heard Josie shuffle outside on the steps. Silence. Inside, polish, varnish, twilight. Outside, April brightness, cherry blossoms, stirrings of bright greenery and Josie with a quenched pipe, hungry, in his long overcoat corded at the waist.

I heard footsteps approaching along the avenue, up the steps. The doorbell or knocker wasn't sounded. I listened. Josie spoke to the newly arrived.

"She's just gone in — she should be out in a minute"

"Is she"?

A younger man's voice; so he was going to have to share his



# A 'LIBERAL' IRISH-AMERICAN

BY CON HOULIHAN.

PAUL O'DWYER is possibly the best-known Irish-American of this generation. He is an emigrant from Mayo who rose in the world through energy and ability and the great opportunities America affords for adult education.

He is something of a hero among the liberals. He opposed the war in Vietnam at a time when such a stand was not fashionable; he defended the Berrigans; he has long been involved in the struggle to improve the lot of the mentally handicapped.

But on one issue he has taken up a position that is based on criminal ignorance. We are all familiar with the uneducated, loud-mouthed Irish-American who sees this very complex problem in frighteningly simple terms.

There is little we can do about such people except pray for them. But when such a man as Paul O'Dwyer advocates the same sentiments one feels a great sadness and a great hopelessness.

In a recent interview he gave abundant evidence that the happenings of these late terrible years have not even chipped at his shell of ignorance. Now when the most determined of the guerillas have come to a kind of halt he still cries 'Fight on.'

His most recent effusion makes it very clear that behind the liberal facade is a sectarian bigot and a very ignorant one at that.

"Sometimes I wonder," he says, "would it be a good thing if England had a De Gaulle who would say to the settlers 'out' like they did in Algeria."

The lack of understanding in that sentiment condemns Mr. O'Dwyer. He is not the only one, incidentally, to draw a parallel with Algeria. It is a favourite comparison in Kevin Street 'thinking', especially as articulated by Daithi O Conaill.

sandwiches with a fellow traveller. Josie didn't show any resentment.

"Doul weather have been bad"

"It has"

"It have been awful"

"It has"

Silence

"Du know what I tink"?

"No".

"Dere's a lot of poishins in the air - I gets oul pains".

"There is".

Silence.

"Where are you goin"?

"Nenagh".

"Is that a good place"?

"Tis good - I'll try the farmers".

"Why so"?

"I'll do a bit of work with dem"

"Are they good"?

"D'are".

Silence.

"Limerick is no good of a place - dere's poishins in d'air".

"I wouldn't stay here much longer".

Silence.

"What does the weather be like in Nenagh"?

"Ah tis good - tis good in Nenagh".

Silence.

"She should be out soon"

"She should".

Later that evening as I walked through Limerick's hometime traffic and bustle I saw Josie again. The familiar figure moving his own slow way; wondering perhaps if he too shouldn't try Nenagh, a far off world of promise. He disappeared into the crowds. A pulse of Limerick life lost in the surge of an April evening. Not down - and definately not out!

Not only does this attitude reveal the hypocrisy contained in the official policy of the alleged followers of Wolfe Tone—it also displays an alarming ignorance of Irish history.

What after all is a 'settler'? How many generations must you be here to be a 'native'?

In the Ice Age there was no life on this island. That may seem a long time ago, but in terms of human evolution it is only the blinking of an eye. Since then several waves of emigrants have come, some as invaders, more as part of commercial and industrial movements.

How do you decide which wave is Irish and which is not? Is it a question of length of tenure? Seemingly it is not.

A few years ago we saw the rise of a great national leader who had changed himself into an Irishman overnight.

Would Paul O'Dwyer regard him as a settler? Seemingly he would not, since he so vociferously supported him. But those whose families have been here for over three hundred years are 'settlers' according to Mr. O'Dwyer.

It is all passing strange. Or maybe it is very simple; perhaps Mr. O'Dwyer's criterion is religious. Catholic equals Irish and let us have no further complications. And anybody who is not in favour of separatism is a West Briton.

Strangely enough, we never hear of West Romans. An orthodox Catholic cannot be a republican—he bows to the dictates of an authoritarian church. But such niceties do not seem to bother Paul O'Dwyer—just clear the settlers out and all will be well. Ireland Catholic is Ireland free...

All Northern Protestants are not the kind of bigots his statements implies. Their common denominator is a fierce determination not to be subject to a theocratic state. They are not the less Irish for that.

What Mr. O'Dwyer seemingly cannot see is that the essence of the problem is not that Britain wants a part of Ireland but that a part of Ireland wants to stay in the United Kingdom....

Paul O'Dwyer tells us that the rift between the Irish and the Irish-Americans is becoming deeper every week and that we cannot afford to see it developing.

This is the madness of arrogance on his part. Why should we apologise because we do not share their silly dreams? And why, if they love this country so much, do they not come and live here? Then it might penetrate their minds that the situation is not so simple after all.

They might also realise the criminal folly of attempting to forge two elements of a nation together by obscene means.

Do these great dreamers realise the truth of Bloody Friday and Claudy and the Abercorn and Guildford and Birmingham? Have they forgotten what happened in Dublin last May? And yet they accuse the people here of being apathetic. They have suffered too. It is very easy to be patriotic from the safe side of the ocean.

Paul O'Dwyer tells us that the Irish in America will go on giving money to the movement 'until the sun sets.' If they want to cause suffering and death and economic depression, they are going about it the right way. If they want to make impossible the union of our different elements, then they have found an infallible formula. But Paul O'Dwyer should know better. Or perhaps he is only an opportunist-politician after all. If that is so, his crime is all the graver.

There is one consolation: the 'militant patriots' among the Irish-Americans are a minority. The majority should make their voices heard.

(Reprinted from "The Kerryman", 4/4/'75).

## THERE IS AN OIL ...!

The acute petrol shortage didn't seem to bother a certain group of Limerick doctors spending their ration of essential 'juice' enjoying the warm sunshine in Kilkee, during the recent fine spell.

### HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the concluding part of "The Limerick Press and Chicago", part six of "The Parish Pump" and a letter from Tom Morris, president of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce, have been held over until next month.



# THE MAFIA'S MUSICAL RIDE

PART ONE

Industries close down for a variety of reasons. In the present economic recession, some novel explanations have been advanced to account for the shut-down of a number of factories. But it is doubtful if a more bizarre record exists in Irish industrial history to match the performance of International Piano Industries at Shannon's Industrial Estate.

The "quality" "Sunday Times" was so intrigued by the story that it sent one of its journalists, Paddy McGarvey, to Shannon to investigate the background to the collapse of the company. The paper headlined the article: "Piano Makers Play An Irish Lament - Paddy McGarvey tells what happened after an Irish factory accepted an offer it couldn't refuse".

After this Mafia-style introduction McGarvey reported:

*Ireland's only piano company has crashed on a discordant note. As a result, 25 piano makers and three blind tuners are desperately trying to form a co-operative to keep the business going. International Piano Industries closure with debts of nearly £250,000 is a tale of international intrigue centred on the Shannon Free Airport Development Authority's industrial estate near Limerick.*

McGarvey went on to tell how after Rippen, the Dutch piano factory, had closed down in 1971, several hundred pianos had been sold off for £5 each. Then he described how the Italian connection began:

*Enter Matteo Galanti, a peripatetic Italian gentleman from Mondaino, a small town near Bologna. Galanti and his brothers through their master company, Galanti Fratelli, appear to control an international maze of music-making concerns, including General Electro-Music (U.K.) a British sales operation for musical instruments and electronic music equipment. Shannon Developments - accepted Galanti's offer to take over Rippen. Shannon - leased the Rippen factory to International Piano Industries (I.P.I.), Galanti's Irish subsidiary.*

The factory got back into business and used the traditional cast-iron and steel welded frames in making the pianos instead of the previous firm's aluminium frames. After about a busy year and a half, however, the first serious doubt emerged that things were not as happy as they could be. McGarvey takes up the story.

*- it appeared that I.P.I. was receiving little benefit from its booming business. Galanti-owned I.P.I. was simply providing pianos for Galanti-owned G.E.M. Electronics of Mondaino, its parent. And while there was some evidence that the pianos were being sold extensively in Italy and Germany and even in Poland, the Shannon operation ended up as principal creditor to G.E.M. John Hayes of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union says: "Over one period we produced 4,200 pianos and they all went to Italy. But only 2,000 were paid for, while the marketing costs and commission for the total were deducted from the payments to the company for the 2,000".*

But an earlier indication of how the workers were to be treated was given in June 1973 when one of the firm's directors Vittorio Amadei, was interviewed by journalist Liam Nolan. Amadei accused the Irish workers of not being able to do the type of work he wanted and also stated that he had been charged £150 for a meal for seven people. His subsequent denial of these statements was rejected by Nolan who said: "To deny what he said about Irish workers is extraordinary. I still have the notes I made of our conversation as soon as I got back to my hotel. It is a pity that Mr. Amadei - a charming man - is now trying to get out from under what he said".

Because of the row caused by these statements and the pressure applied by I.P.I. workers, Amadei was later said to have been removed as one of the directors. At this stage,

*Off came the green sward like a bid,  
Revealing what was much better hid.* W.H. Auden.

managing directors were coming and going with bewildering rapidity. According to McGarvey, between October 1973 and May 1974, I.P.I. ran itself - there was no managing director. "Industrial psychologists can make what they will of it, but during this period production doubled from 30 pianos to 60", McGarvey commented.

Further examples of the attitude of the firm's owners to the workers were given by Frank Prendergast, secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. Branch at Shannon, in a report to the April meeting of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions. In the course of his statement, Prendergast explained how on the 22nd May 1974, he was called to a meeting at ten past twelve and told by the Galanti owners that (a) they had to catch a plane for Europe in twenty minutes and (b) they were laying off 57 workers. When Prendergast protested at the manner in which this action was being carried out, he was told that this was the only way the remaining 72 jobs could be saved.

The "Sunday Times" continues the sorry saga:

*Fearing more redundancies, Prendergast sought help from Justin Keating, Ireland's Minister for Industry. By then, however, the writing was on the wall, though no one seems to have seen it. Even as Shannon Development, with a nudge from Keating, halved I.P.I.'s rent, more than £90,000 worth of piano actions were shipped to Italy.*

The Mafia hatchet-man brought in to supervise these mopping up operations was Danizio Cintioli, a young Italian from the "family's" Chicago home. In November 1974, Frank Prendergast was approached by Cintioli who told him that the company's insurance brokers in Limerick were refusing to provide any further cover for the workers until the brokers were paid what they were already owed. Galanti instructed Cintioli not to pay the full amount due and suggested that S.F.A.D.Co. should pay some of this sum. Again Prendergast came to the rescue and managed to arrange a temporary settlement with the brokers.

However this respite was of short duration. On the 27th March of this year, the workers were told that the owners were demanding that, because of alleged financial losses during the previous two years, the company should not have to pay rent, rates or insurance payments. Galanti further wanted the Shannon Free Airport Development Company to meet all these outstanding sums.

The Development Company attempted to get Galanti to pay £5,000 in rent, £3,000 in insurance and undertook to exempt I.P.I. from rates (£8,000 in 1975). The factory was also asked to lodge £100,000 with the Chase and Bank of Ireland and to allow a S.F.A.D.Co. representative on its board of directors. When Galanti refused to agree to these proposals, the bank, which had already paid the I.P.I. workers' wages for the previous three weeks, appointed a Receiver Manager. This Receiver indicated that he would try to restore the business as a viable entity but, after a further week of fruitless endeavour, he was forced to admit that the situation was hopeless.

It was only then that the total Galanti shambles became clear. Not content with its tax-free musical ride and the shipping out of most of its pianos, I.P.I. had also reneged on its responsibilities as an employer right across the economic and social boards. There wasn't a penny available to pay the wages of the workers for their week's work under the control of the Receiver - and, as far as was known, there was no money due to I.P.I. from any sources. Other monies lost by the workers amounted to £16,000 in holiday payments, redundancy benefits, etc. In addition, approximately £30,000 in social welfare and P.A.Y.E. payments had been deducted by Galanti but never paid to the State. A further £400, paid by the workers in weekly sums of 10p to Gorta, the Irish "freedom from hunger" campaign, was also missing. Of the material left on the premises, only seventy pianos were fit for sale.

(to be concluded).